



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

House of Representatives

In Celebration of Juneteenth

*HON. BILL FOSTER
OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
June 19, 2013*

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Juneteenth, the oldest known celebration marking the end of slavery in the United States.

It was not until June 19, 1865, two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, that Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas and announced that the war had ended and the slaves were freed. Since then, Juneteenth has been celebrated nationally, serving as an important opportunity for friends, families and neighbors to come together and rejoice in our shared heritage. It's an important reminder both of the great tragedy of slavery and of the courage and resilience of all those who fought for change.

I am proud to look back on this day at my own family's tradition of fighting for civil rights in this country. My great grandfather led one of the first units of African-American soldiers into battle, where they risked their lives and their own freedom to bring greater freedom to all Americans of every skin color. That tradition carried on through my family to my father who joined the civil rights struggle of the 1960s and went on to write much of the enforcement language behind the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Recently, I attended a ceremony commemorating the life of civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers on the 50th anniversary of his assassination. His legacy is a reminder of the courage of individuals who fight for freedom and opportunity. While we have made great strides since that day in 1865, the struggle for equality is not over.

As I commemorate this historic day, I would like to urge my colleagues to honor the memory of all who have fought for freedom and equality and stand with all who continue the struggle today.